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A CHAPLAIN'S HANDBOOK
ON PROVIDING EFFECTIVE GENERAL PROTESTANT
WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLACKS

CHAPLAIN, MAJOR WALTER E. BEAMON 86-0225

"insights into tomorrow"

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TITLE HANDBOOK - A CHAPLAIN'S HANDBOOK ON PROVIDING EFFECTIVE
GENERAL PROTESTANT WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLACKS

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Submitted to the faculty in partial fulfillment of
requirements for graduation.

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PREFACE

This paper is about worship. It highlights and brings to focus an activity which traditionally is of extreme importance for Protestants. This is especially true for Black Protestants.

Why a paper on worship? For a number of years I have been a part of a great team, the USAF Chaplaincy. The challenge of providing ministry which meets the needs of people where they are, whether crossroads or valleys, on the flightline or in the pew, is nonetheless worthy of every ounce of effort. The major thrust and motivation of this research has been directed toward gaining a deeper understanding of some basic worship requirements for the largest minority group in the USAF, Black Americans. More specifically, my concern throughout the study has to do with a fundamental question as to the capability of Protestant Chaplains in providing effective worship experiences for Blacks within the General Protestant worship service.

This paper is written with the hope that all USAF Chaplains will gain new insights which will aid them in heightening their sensitivity as worship leaders in the General Protestant service. It is especially designed for chaplains at wing or base level.

I wish to acknowledge the helpful criticisms and advice of my sponsor, Chaplain (Colonel) Frank Metcalf, and my advisor, Chaplain (Major) Robert Gilman. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to my typist, Mrs Martha Long, who typed and retyped this manuscript in its several stages. My deepest gratitude goes to my wife, Ikie, whose support of my endeavor spanned the gamut.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Walter E. Beamon is an Air Force Chaplain with ten years of active duty service. He completed his undergraduate work at Tougaloo College, Tougaloo MS in 1961, where he was awarded a BS degree in Biology. He taught high school Biology for the next five years. Having sensed a call to ministry, he entered the Seminary at Virginia Union University School of Theology, Richmond VA, where he was awarded a Masters of Divinity Degree (M.Div.), in 1969. He was further awarded the Masters of Theology (Th.M.) in the area of Pastoral Theology from Union Theological Seminary, Richmond VA, in 1970. He served as pastor of the Shaw Temple African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (A.M.E.Z.), Atlanta, GA until July 1975. He received a direct commission into the USAF Chaplaincy in August 1975. He has served as Installation Chaplain at Keesler AFB MS, RAF Lakenheath, England, and Maxwell AFB AL. His positions at Maxwell include Squadron Officer School Chaplain and Installation Station Chaplain for Gunter Air Force Station. He is married to the former Ikie [REDACTED]. They have two children, Angela and Tony.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years that the author has served as an active duty Air Force chaplain, one basic issue has been voiced by black military lay people over and over again. The issue concerns the General Protestant Chaplain's ability to provide worship services which are more relevant to their spiritual needs. From the author's perspective as a leader of worship, there is a common perception that most General Protestant (GP) worship services are not designed to meet the spiritual needs of the minority members of the congregation, be they Black, Anglo-Catholic, Pentecostal, Chicano, female, single or divorced. The concern for sensitivity and relevancy is not limited to blacks, as indicated above. However, the primary focus of this study will be limited to assessing and providing for spiritual needs of blacks in the liturgical GP worship service.

A major issue for discussion has to do with whether the spiritual needs of blacks and whites are different. Dr George B. Thomas, a professor at Interdenominational Theological Center (ITC) in Atlanta, Georgia provides some insights on this question.

The spiritual needs of blacks versus whites demonstrate some differences and some similarities. The major similarity is that both are trying to acknowledge and praise God in worship. The difference has to do with the manner of worship. There are many factors that should be considered in evaluating the differences. Among the differences are: the sense in which black people have their own values, one of which is to put their whole selves into their worship experience with feeling coupled with active participation. Whites place higher emphasis upon teaching (12:--).

This assessment identifies some key elements which the author believes are vital to black parishioners in worship, namely, a sense of freedom and joy coupled with feeling appealing to the experiential rather than the cognitive senses.

The purpose of this research project is to discover and define those elements which appear to be missing links for blacks in the GP worship service. The author believes that the lack of proper awareness, sensitivity and flexibility contribute to little participation by blacks in the GP service.

There are limitations to the scope of this handbook:

- a. It is limited to a study of General Protestant worship services.
- b. Responses from interviews represent a small sample of theological perspective.

This handbook focuses on what the author believes is a significant concern among many Black Protestants in the Air Force today. This basic concern is that worship should appeal to the heart as well as to the mind.

CHAPTER II

THE CHAPEL PROGRAM IN FOCUS

The military chapel program offers both chaplains and laity an extraordinary opportunity for wide exposure and growth. The mere idea that people from very diverse backgrounds and cultures gather week after week in corporate worship is astonishing. Even more challenging is the fact that Protestant chaplains have to provide ministry which goes far beyond their own background and denominational preference. Air Force Regulation 265-1 specifically addresses the nature and scope of the chapel program.

Air Force chapel programs are designed to meet the religious needs of all members of the Air Force community through a comprehensive ministry that matches people and resources to the particular environment of each basic community. The goal is to help persons develop and enhance their relationship with God and with one another (9:5).

Obviously such a task for any clergy person is monumental, and yet, such is the task of every Air Force chaplain. The author does not believe that chaplains are obligated to try to be all things to all people, for this would not be possible even in one's own church. However, he does believe that a broad ministry, reflecting the gifts and talents of a large cadre of chaplains, from many different backgrounds is advantageous in that parishioners are exposed to a variety of approaches to worship.

The concept of comprehensive ministry as reflected in AFR 265-1 is the basis for the uncertainty and stress many chaplains feel in attempting to provide "effective ministry." How does one define or characterize such a term as "effective?" It is this author's belief that it is a subjective term and very difficult to reach general consensus for a definition. If this is true, chaplains may conceivably interpret the meaning of "effective ministry" differently basing their definitions upon their own values rather than a comparison to an objective standard.

Effectiveness, defined by the author, is that which produces a desired response. Admittedly this leaves room for a wide spectrum of opinions and judgements. The following is offered as an example. Suppose one is assigned to a military installation where 20% of the personnel are black. Further, assume that 10% of that number identify themselves as committed Christians of the Protestant tradition. As a further descriptor, they indicate that they grew up in the church, have a history of faithful attendance of worship services, and place great emphasis upon the nurturing aspect of belonging to a body of believers, i.e., Sunday church school, choir, ushers, lay leadership, etc. However, many gradually leave having decided that their needs were not met and possibly could not be met with the framework of the GP services. This is due basically because they sense that the service of worship is so different from their tradition in terms of format, content and manner in which it is conducted.

While bearing this in mind, consider the perceptions of some chaplains who are responsible for leading and conducting the GP service. Undoubtedly, there are those who view and understand that the service is open to participation by people from many backgrounds, but also view it as being targeted toward meeting the needs of the majority parishioners or White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP). The fact that 1%-2% of the congregation are black may not be of any concern and may raise the question, "What's the big problem?" A question such as this may indicate a number of problems. First, it could reveal a lack of sensitivity as it relates to needs of minorities. Unconsciously, one might assume that because blacks were not present in large numbers in the GP service, their spiritual needs were being met somewhere other than that service.

How then could the absence of blacks in large numbers from the GP service impact upon the total worship experience? An indication might be the success and vitality of Black Gospel services such as those found at Lowry, Eglin and Langley Air Force Bases. If this vitality and participation is the basis for the success of these Black Gospel services, why not at other bases with similar demographic factors? The author believes that the impact of the absence of blacks is two-fold. First, it is possible that a vacuum is created in the sense that many prospective worshippers are missing from the fellowship. The second impact is a consequence of the first, namely, the service is deprived of many gifts, talents and resources.

The thrust of the hypothetical scenario is to emphasize the interrelationship between the concepts of effectiveness and sensitivity. It is that demonstration of effectiveness and sensitivity which provides an atmosphere where people are motivated to take risks with relationships and make efforts to bridge gaps and learn from each other. Dr Thomas offers a challenge along these lines and looks at the potential outcome from such experimentation in worship.

Blacks need to capitalize on the varieties of worship experiences while whites need to develop a greater sensitivity to the nature of the black worship experience. In other words, there should be a balance established in the worship service to the extent that when the formal service ends, the bi-product is not simply feeling nor thinking but a change in behavior (12:--).

How can this be applied? In the author's view, there are tremendous benefits to be gained if blacks are willing to consider other styles of worship as being valid and capable of providing the necessary ingredients for balance in the total worship experience. On the other hand, there can be no substitute for whites demonstrating sensitivity and respect for the nature of the black worship experience.

The author is aware of instances in which a perceived lack of respect for black worship was demonstrated by the employment of untrained individuals to serve as worship leaders. It is the author's position that chaplains cannot afford to delegate responsibility for meeting the spiritual needs of blacks in worship to a sergeant or other untrained persons who have been licensed to preach, but have few other credentials. This is not to imply that a sergeant

is incapable of leading effective worship. However, there have been cases in which the service of worship was significantly degraded because great care was not used in the selection of worship leaders. When the selection of worship leaders result in a poorly conducted service, it generally adds to the perception of some that the black worship experience is inferior to other services of worship.

In addition to the GP service, Air Force Regulation 265-1 also provides for other special and denominational services of worship. They are only offered when there is an indication of a sufficient number of personnel with liturgical worship needs and personnel available to satisfy requirements. Denominational services are both liturgical and non-liturgical. Among the liturgical services are Lutheran and Episcopal services. Non-liturgical services include Pentecostal, Country Church and Gospel services. The latter two groups would be made up of several denominations. The overall objective again is that of matching people with resources within the particular community and enabling people to develop and enhance their relationship with God and one another.

Considering the above objective, one might conclude that leadership for the services provided is a key element in eliciting positive response. An analysis of the role of worship leaders in the chapel program will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

THE CHAPLAIN AS WORSHIP LEADER

In 1969, as a graduating senior from seminary, the author was tasked with choosing between writing a major paper on a selected theological issue or spending two weeks in Chicago, Illinois in a project referred to as "The Plunge," an experience in inner-city living. If one's choice was "The Plunge," he made such a choice with the knowledge that his basic survival in a sometimes hostile environment was at stake. Students taking "The Plunge" were given approximately \$30 and were expected to survive in the inner city for two weeks.

This experience was designed with the objective of helping young seminarians become more aware and sensitive to inner-city, urban living conditions. The philosophy of the school was that the experience of the plunge would make a significant impact upon one's ministry, especially for those who would someday choose or be assigned as pastors/worship leaders in ghetto communities. Sensitivity was the key. Because without it, one's ministry was very limited. Likewise, the same applies for chaplains in the military chaplaincy.

In a real sense, the chaplain who makes the choice of entering active duty without any prior military background, who is a civilian one day and an Air Force chaplain the next day, might be considered as having made a plunge. The transition from a civilian life to a military environment may be one of great anxiety. Consider these comments on "The Challenge of the Chaplaincy" from the Chaplains Orientation Course text:

For the newly commissioned Chaplain, entry into the military environment can be a bewildering experience, particularly from the standpoint of his religious ministry. In his civilian ministry, his professional relationships were characterized by a singularity of purpose and personal intimacy within the traditional environment of a parish church. Beginning with his theological training, even the "practical" courses listed in almost every seminary catalogue--homiletics, liturgies, worship, counseling, religious education, and pastoral care--take basic parish social structures for granted. But when he enters the Military society and faces structures different from those to which he is accustomed, he must learn quickly to distinguish the essential from the non-essential and to separate inner spirit from outward shape. Unless he does so, he will unwittingly carry the form and style of his civilian ministry into the military environment where they may not be relevant (8:10).

Indoctrination for the newly assigned chaplain must incorporate a thorough orientation for the establishment of sensitivity in providing leadership in a General Protestant service of worship.

Each person entering the chaplaincy will discover a wide variety of cultures, religious traditions and beliefs. In light of this reality, one may expect to find the GP service a unique opportunity for growth. The chaplains' success in making the necessary adjustments for effective ministry will be largely determined by his/her traditions, perceptions, exposures and flexibility, but most of all his/her ability to be sensitive to the needs of others.

If indeed sensitivity is as crucial as the author believes, then the question must be raised regarding how the concept of pluralistic sensitivity can be applied within the total spectrum of chapel services. Perhaps an analogy is apropos at this point. The Gospel Service is a predominantly black worship service. It is usually evangelistic in flavor and conservative or fundamental in outreach. It is sometimes viewed by chaplains and lay people alike as not being as valid as the GP service because they fail to understand the nature of the black worship experience. Pluralistic sensitivity is best demonstrated by those chaplains and laity who are quick to acknowledge that there are a variety of ministries and avenues by which people worship God. It is further evidenced when people are able to affirm that freedom of religious expression is a constitutional right and there are no superior or inferior worship services, but different approaches to worship.

Pluralistic sensitivity, from the author's perspective, also has other implications. Many chaplains, new to the Air Force, are seldom given immediate responsibility for conducting the GP service on a consistent basis. Taking the plunge into a pluralistic setting from a strict denominational background requires time to appreciate the great variety of religious practices present in a typical GP worship service. Of course, there are always exceptions to this rule, i.e., number of chaplains on the staff, seniority, and the desires of the installation staff chaplain, to name but a few. There is another exception. Should the new chaplain happen to be black and a predominantly black worship service (Gospel service) is available, he/she may be immediately assigned the entire responsibility for its operation. In the author's view, it is generally believed that the black chaplain is more qualified than others on the staff to lead this particular service. The truth is that while many blacks may be capable of assuming this responsibility, not all are ready for such a task. Just as in other ethnic groups not all White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) prefer liturgical worship. The assumption that all black chaplains have the expertise to function in this capacity depends upon their theological background, interests, personality and abilities and not the color of their skin. As a matter of fact, this author has seen white chaplains who have been very effective leaders of black worship.

In view of the wide diversity of opinions, values and theological persuasions, increasing attention is being given to the concept of pluralism. The author believes this attention is well deserved. One must understand the concept of pluralism and establish a position which is compatible with Air Force policy. Unless the chaplain is sure of his/her stance on this issue, it is possible that great difficulty may be experienced in attempting to provide effective ministry as a worship leader, be it directed to divorcees, singles, Chicanos or Blacks. One must also recognize that pluralism is the very foundation upon which the chaplaincy rests.

William Greenbaum, a Harvard University Professor of Sociology, in support of pluralism, feels that turning to those in the American society who have known different values is an asset.

We must begin to learn from native Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Blacks, Chinese, and other oppressed groups What I am proposing is that the past exclusion of minority was a mistake . . . people from the Western mainstream may turn out to be humanity's greatest hope (4:21).

Greenbaum's reference has some very important and far reaching implications. The author takes the position that this is especially true as it relates to worship services in the chapel. The emphasis upon feeling and a sense of joy in worship is vital to the black tradition of worship. However, it may indicate, from the lack of black participation, that these elements may be missing from the GP service. This in part might explain the phenomenon of Gospel services attracting much larger attendance and participation of blacks than most GP services. Perhaps, as Greenbaum has stated, much can be gained by actively soliciting the input of minorities. This is especially true for blacks who represent the largest group of minorities in the USAF Protestant community as evidenced by statistics from Air Force Military Personnel Center (11:--).

Statistically and by actual practice this author has attempted to demonstrate that there is an unfulfilled yearning for spiritual nurture through worship for many black protestants. In the next two chapters an attempt will be made to highlight the cultural and theological issues which are at the heart of the black worship experience.

CHAPTER IV

ETHNOLOGY AND THE BLACK WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Two basic factors will serve as a focal point for discussion on the issue of ethnology and the black worship experience. These are traditions and culture. The author believes that these are the primary factors which must be considered in any attempt to bridge the gap between blacks and whites in worship. Dr Thomas, cited earlier in this paper, made a basic distinction between content in worship for blacks and whites. In a typical black worship service, heavy emphasis is placed upon feeling one's religion. In the typical white worship service a correspondingly heavier emphasis is placed upon an intellectual appreciation of God's truth, rather than the experiential. Much attention is given to thinking. The service is usually formal and logical progression flows from start to finish. There is little room for deviation from the norm or established pattern of worship.

From the author's perspective as a former pastor, several other factors in the black worship tradition are crucial. First, there's the element of time. Blacks usually are not bound by the clock in worship. A two hour worship service is common in the black community. Because freedom in worship is important, the parishioners are not offended nor are they apologetic when the service of worship goes longer than the usual length. The key is, is it real? Can God be turned on and off in sixty (60) minutes?

In many black services, even until this day, an informal prayer service precedes the formal service. It is led by lay officers of the church and usually consists of hymn singing, scripture reading, prayers and testimonies. It will last from fifteen to thirty minutes. The minister is seldom a part of the service. It is strictly lay conducted. This is vital to the service for it serves as preparation for the "formal" worship experience. It further serves to unite people and steer them toward achievement of being on "one accord." The prayers are expressed with fervor in behalf of the pastor and congregation, that God might empower them to truly experience his presence during the worship. Another aspect of the black worship experience is the sense in which blacks expect something to happen which in some way points to the mysterious acts of God. It may be that from the sermon someone is convicted of sin and surrenders their life to the Lord. It may be the expectation of physical healing or mental relief from anguish. But a sense of expectation is present in one form or another, whether a word of hope spoken by the minister or some act which reveals God's involvement in the now.

Music is also a very vital element in the black worship experience. Historically speaking, there is a direct linkage between Black Africans and Black Americans. Music can be seen as part of that linkage. Dr Melva Costen, Associate Professor of Music and Worship at Interdenominational Theological Center, shed some light on that linkage.

In the African experience music is vital to all of life. We have brought that here as a part of the Afro-American experience. We have been able to take what is given us, our gift for music, and use our talent of improvising to

make something out of nothingness. We've been able to take our gift for music, listen to what the white man has taught us about Christianity but then in our own setting to adapt it for our own selves. I call it "blackinizing." In other words we didn't start with their stuff. We started with our African songs. But after we heard their songs we never really sang them the way they sang them. Basically, the reason was we didn't like that kind of plain, old straight singing. We would take it and even rework the words and way of presenting it, so it involved more of us. Another very important factor as it relates to the music is the fact that the African and the Afro-American recognizes the importance of music to the whole self. In other words, we don't separate the secular and the sacred. We put our whole self into all that we do. That's why shouting, the clapping of hands and even gospel music is significant in our manner of worship today (10:--).

Costen demonstrates the strong role that music played in African culture and how it was transferred to American soil. That role was greatly expanded during slavery to communicate messages of hope for freedom. Some of the spirituals were especially freedom-oriented, emphasizing escape from the agony and oppression of the slavemaster and the diabolical system of slavery. Spirituals such as "Steal Away" and "Gonna Lay Down My Burden Down By The Riverside" reflect messages of freedom from bondage and oppression in this life. These songs demonstrate the ability of the slaves to adapt their music from the language of their community into messages of hope in their attempt to escape physical and spiritual bondage. This freedom in musical expression incorporates the ideas projected in Dr Costen's assessment. Coupled with music, in importance, is the interaction between the black preacher and his congregation.

Dr Thomas, who has done extensive research in the area of African religions, recently made a study of "The African Inheritance and Black Worship Experience." The primary focus of this study was upon the dynamics between the Leadership and the people, in other words, the interaction between them within the context of worship.

As one observes the choir singing, the lay leaders in the Amen corner, the preacher exercising his gift in preaching . . . Something happens, . . . it comes about from African linkages (12:--).

This description by Dr Thomas allows one to mentally visualize a typical black church setting and the interaction between the members of the congregation and the preacher. The dynamics established creates the worship atmosphere which allows "the moving of the Holy Spirit," a concept affirmed and expected in the black church. W.E.B. Dubois, a scholar and authority on black culture, did research on the uniqueness of black worship in the Negro church. He provided a vivid picture of how the black preacher in relating to black worshippers demonstrated the political bond between the African chief and tribe. In this research, Dubois reveals that the black church became the new tribe. The chief was the preacher. The preacher functioned in many roles for the benefit of the

people. He was spiritual, social and political leader, healer, and comforter. The leader in the African tribe was a specialist, a traditional medium, diviner, soul doctor and medicine man. These functions continued in the Afro-American worship through the "invisible church." Indeed it was this relationship that provided the main link of survival of the African experience in America.

E. Franklin Frazier provides helpful information about the "invisible church." It existed for 150 years before Christianity was affirmed and adopted. Until this time, traditional African religion was practiced. It took root among enslaved blacks. The preacher was usually a plantation worker who had a little education and had been taught something about the Bible. The code of religion of blacks was simple and closely observed. Since all forms of organized social effort were forbidden among the slaves, the black preacher played the most important role in the "invisible church" among the slaves. He usually achieved a position of dominance because God had "called" him to be a spiritual leader. There were several qualifications that the black preacher had to possess. He had to have some knowledge of the Bible, however imperfect or distorted. He had to combine his knowledge of the scriptures with an ability to speak and communicate this knowledge to the slaves. He had to also possess the ability to sing. Usually the singing was accompanied by shouting or holy dancing. Blacks worshipped and continued that tone of feeling expressed in Africa with drums. Drums were used in the new tribal church until forbidden. However, rhythm was maintained without drums by clapping hands, snapping fingers and patting feet among the bush arbors and praise houses, huts, and shanties (1:16-18).

In light of the previous discussion, one must still ask the question as to whether it is possible to bridge the gap between blacks and whites in worship in the GP service. We have seen that, culturally speaking, blacks usually have no problem with time when it comes to worship. Whites, on the other hand, are usually accustomed to a rigid time frame for worship. The worship service is logically planned and rather formal. Freedom and flexibility are important elements for blacks in worship. There is little of these present in predominately white services. Music and preaching are central and key elements in the black worship experience. Everything else is secondary. These may be of lesser importance in predominately white worship services. Culturally speaking, one can readily see that there is a wide gap in worship experiences between black and white parishioners. A decisive conclusion regarding bridging the gap between blacks and whites with the GP services cannot be made at this point, but will be reflected in Chapter VI.

In the next chapter we will examine the issue of Theology and the black worship experience. What one believes plays a significant role in how one chooses to worship.

CHAPTER V

LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND THE BLACK WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

We have taken a close look at the nature and impact of heritage on the black worship experience. Now we shall consider another factor of equal importance, the influence of theology. John W. Fleming, Associate Professor of African and Afro-American studies at Shaw University in North Carolina provides some rather profound thoughts on the issue of theology as it relates to black people. He believes that the historical background of oppression captures the significance of the total black experience as one understands theology in the black community.

As a result of this oppression, three outlooks have characterized the religious mood of black people:
(1) a religion of resignation--which has given up on the good life in this world and placed all of its hope on a life beyond; (2) a religion of accommodation--which attempts to adjust to and appease the status quo, and (3) a religion of liberation--which seeks to break the shackles of oppression (3:62).

Fleming hastens to point out the fact that these three outlooks have always existed side by side in the black community. However, he points out that the third outlook seems to be the present trend. That outlook focuses on individuals and organizations relentless in their fight for freedom and self determination.

Dr James H. Cone, a black professor at the Union Theological Seminary, New York City, has written two volumes on the black theology of liberation. In his assessment of the past and present regarding theology in the black community he had this to say.

The task of black theology is to analyze the black man's condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ with the purpose of creating a new understanding of black dignity among black people, and providing the necessary soul in that people, to destroy white racism (1:14).

With this statement of purpose and goal of black theology, Cone does not draw a rigid line between theology and freedom. They seem to exist side by side. In Cone's thinking, theology and freedom serves as a means of preparing black minds for total commitment to the goal of freedom. An example of those who, in a sense, combined theology and freedom, historically speaking, are: Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner. These were black exhorters and leaders of slave rebellions (3:90).

Cone further emphasized the necessity of black theology and liberation in this way:

In a society where people are oppressed because they are black, Christian theology must become black theology. This is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ (1:17).

What does this mean? The author believes those who acknowledge the reality of the world, who view it with its inequities, injustice, and oppressive mentality, and refuse to succumb to its power, are motivated and empowered by liberation theology. These individuals recognize that they are free and capable of influencing the status of their community. They undoubtedly see themselves as catalytic agents with the capacity to effect change in the present life. Individuals such as Dr Martin Luther King, Jr are clear examples of those who subscribed to liberation theology.

In light of the purpose and goals of liberation theology, how and by what means can we see its manifestation in the black worship experience? Dr William B. McClain, founding director of the United Methodist Multi-Ethnic Center for Ministry at Drew University and faculty member at Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington DC, makes an interesting observation:

In the black-oriented worship, there is not the sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular that is more characteristic of European-oriented tradition. Saturday night and Sunday morning blend together as one reality in celebration of life's wholeness. People's mode of worship, religious practices, attitudes and symbols are inevitably and inextricably bound up with the psychological and physical realities of their day-to-day existence. Survival amidst complex and contradictory realities becomes extremely important and therefore something to celebrate when the people gather. The pressing problems that were faced in the streets are sung, prayed and preached about in church. As one person put it: "In church, we ain't ashamed to be real" (6:13).

It is that sense in which people can affirm the freedom to pull off the masks, get rid of their facades, and experience the forgiveness and redemption of Christ, which characterizes the black worship experience. It is an affirmation that God is at work freeing his people from all that oppresses and attempts to make them less than they are intellectually, socially and theologically.

The question which Dr Costen was asked to address along the lines of black theology and worship, focused on the major theological issues blacks are concerned with today and have a need to hear from the pulpit. She responded by saying:

Sin is a primary and very basic issue. The person needs to understand that God loves him unconditionally, and that he is forgiving. People need to be freed of guilt and sense that God understands their failures and shortcomings. Liberation or freedom is an important issue. We all want to sense that we are free. Liberation leads to healing, that is, being able to open oneself to the physical and spiritual healing of God (10:--).

Dr Costen along with Dr Cone, McClain and Fleming, all see liberation theology as an integral part of the expression and experience of worship in the black community. It is the freedom to be what God intended one to be inspite of shortcomings, which the author believes gives credibility to liberation theology. Perhaps the heart of theology in much of the black tradition stresses recognition of a God who acts in history, who meets us in the suffering and problems of mankind, and with whom we come to a clearer understanding through his involvement in humanity. This theology gives a larger role to man, calling for self-help, self-determination and self-pride.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The extent to which USAF chaplains are capable of providing effective worship for blacks in the GP services must be understood from at least three perspectives. Consideration will be given to an analysis of the chapel program as viewed in AFR 265-1, cultural differences and the black worship experience, and the role of Liberation Theology.

Air Force Regulation 265-1 states that chapel programs are designed to meet the religious needs of all personnel through a comprehensive ministry which matches people and resources to the particular environment of each basic community.

Pluralistic sensitivity is the key to accomplishing the goal stated above. Most chaplains enter the USAF with years of training and academic preparation. However, much of it is specifically related to the doctrines, polity and practices of the churches they represent. Pluralistic sensitivity is a concept which cuts across denominational boundaries. Consequently, in order for a Protestant chaplain to be effective as a worship leader of GP services he/she must make frequent self-assessments. One's self-assessment might take the form of introspection, in which one asks: "What are the needs of individuals whose background and traditions are greatly different from my own? Am I consciously aware of and in some tangible way demonstrating that I recognize and affirm their needs as being valid?" Pluralistic sensitivity, therefore represents the foundation and validity of the military chaplaincy.

Cultural differences as evidenced in the worship expression of blacks is a significant factor in this study. Theologians in the field of worship, have shown that traditionally blacks worship from a feeling mode in contrast to whites, who generally worship from an intellectual or thinking mode. Another cultural element which must be stressed is the significance and importance of time. Blacks historically have demonstrated that there is no regimentation in God's house, that one cannot instantly turn him on, then turn him off in a short time frame. Freedom, involvement and participation requires time. Whites on the other hand, tend to stress the economy of time. It is possible that whites developed this attitude toward worship from the early puritan work ethic. However, early Puritan work ethic is not a part of this study. Spontaneity and freedom of expression are also very important in the Black Religious Experience. This is often not so in predominantly white worship services.

Finally, the third perspective stresses the theological differences of blacks and whites in worship. Although they share one basic similarity which is that both groups are trying to praise God in worship, their manner of worship demonstrates considerable differences. Present trends indicate that many blacks are adherents of "Liberation Theology." This is a theology which affirms freedom and self-determination as the essence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Liberation Theology is expressed in music and preaching in black traditional worship. Its roots are deep and result from African linkages.

In the black-oriented worship service, there is not the sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular that is more characteristic of European-oriented tradition. There is celebration of life's wholeness. People's mode of worship, religious practices, attitudes and symbols are inevitably and inextricably bound up with the psychological and physical realities of their day-to-day existence. Liberation Theology then leads to healing. It enables one to open oneself to the physical and spiritual healing of God.

What then are the results of this study? The author began this study with the belief that the lack of significant attendance by blacks in GP services necessitated the development of such services which were more responsive and appealing to blacks. This would initially involve educating and sensitizing chaplains as to some of the basic spiritual needs of blacks. However, after extensive research in this area, the author believes that cultural backgrounds, traditions, theological understandings and practices are powerful influences and very difficult to transcend. This makes it highly unlikely that chaplains can provide the kind of worship experiences which will attract a significant number of blacks into GP services. The author does not believe the skin color of the chaplain serving as worship leader influences the decision of black parishioners to attend such services. That decision has more to do with the person sensing that their needs will be met once they are present for the service.

The question must then be raised: "What are some alternatives for blacks as it relates to their spiritual needs being met within the chapel community?" Obviously there is a segment of people in the black community who are comfortable with the GP service and find the experience both nurturing and meaningful. However, it is that larger segment who are not greatly benefited that the author believes must be considered.

Having said this, it is the author's opinion that inspite of the fact that the GP service is limited in its appeal to large numbers of blacks, it can be made more attractive and relevant by incorporating some of the following recommendations:

- (a) Choose hymns occasionally which are familiar to blacks, i.e., "What A Fellowship," "Jesus Keep Me Near The Cross," "What A Friend We Have In Jesus."
- (b) Make an effort to locate blacks, preferably from the congregation, who have talent in music. This may be vocal or instrumental. It may be gospel, spirituals, contemporary or classical. Even if it is classical, the chances are good that it will be saturated with feeling and a sense of joy. These elements are very important in the black experience.
- (c) The incorporation of worship through drama with blacks filling key roles. Why not use blacks portraying Mary, Joseph and Jesus? This act has the potential of sending very powerful messages regarding identity.

These suggestions are not offered to encourage "tokenism" or "window dressing" in an effort to appease blacks, for it would be short lived. The main concern is to demonstrate sensitivity and enhance relevancy of the GP services to blacks.

Another very valid option in attempting to meet the needs of blacks is the development of the "Gospel" or "Inspirational Worship Service." It is the author's belief, based on this study, that every Air Force Base with a sizable black population should have a Gospel Worship Service provided. It should have trained leadership whether Air Force Chaplains or civilian clergy. Funds should be appropriated to support it just as any other chapel service. The Installation staff chaplain should be knowledgeable of its operation and be as interested in its role and function as any other chapel service.

The "Gospel Worship Service" is characterized as a "free" style of worship with an evangelistic flavor of expression. There are a number of Air Force bases, i.e. Bolling, Langley, Eglin, which have very successful Gospel services. It is not unusual for attendance at these services to average 300 to 400 per Sunday.

Dr McClain indicated that the Gospel service is more related to cultural, educational and psychological factors than to racial, regional and denominational factors. He further stated.

People choose an informal service of worship for a variety of reasons: (a) Educational level does not encourage participation in printed liturgical materials; (b) cultural level grasps more readily music with a heavy beat, repeated words, and simplistic theology than it grasps a Bach chorale; (c) regimentation of any kind is resisted and persons are oriented to an individualistic rather than a cooperative style of life; (d) free style of worship allows for more emotional gratification within the service. This may or may not be understood as a "gift of the spirit" (6:16).

Those Gospel services which have flourished over the years, have in the author's view, had leadership which understood and was keenly sensitive to the necessity of these elements mentioned by Dr McClain.

One final statement by Dr McClain regarding the leadership of the Gospel service is fitting:

There is no conceivable reason why the Gospel service must be led by black chaplains only. Chaplains should be assigned according to their gifts and graces and skills. Not all black chaplains are comfortable with the free style. However, training, experience and continuing education could provide much in the way of understanding what is present in this tradition and of appreciating its roots. All chaplains could possibly benefit from instruction concerning historical and theological developments of the free liturgical movements from the Reformation onward, as well as the contributing cultural,

educational and psychological factors. Basic is the understanding that worship is (a) the work of the full people of God--not a performance for the people, and not a work limited to the clergy; (b) there is no one "correct" way of doing this work other than a fidelity to Scripture interpreted in each situation (6:17).

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